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### Multidimensionality: Time, Space and Stratigraphy in Historical Dialectology

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MARGARET LAING

## Multidimensionality: Time, Space and Stratigraphy in Historical Dialectology

The dialectologist must be fastidious indeed who would not be satisfied with this extraordinary body of material (Elliott 1883: 490)

### 1. Introduction

To the layman, or even to many practising linguists, the term ‘dialectology’ may suggest static displays of linguistic features on regional maps. However, dialectology does not operate in just one plane. Regional differences occur when changes over time are projected onto a geographical landscape. Linguistic change itself involves interactions within speech communities. This introduces a further dimension – social milieu and the variation that results from the intricacies of language use (Laing / Lass *forthc.*). Dialectology must take into account all three analytical planes: how linguistic forms change through time (diachronic); how they vary across space (diatopic); how the interactions of the speakers and writers of the language produce and define this variation (diastratic).

In dialect studies of modern languages, this social dimension may involve variables such as age, sex, class, religion, occupation, economic status, education and ethnicity. For historical dialectologists social milieu must refer to the whole historical background. The fineness of resolution typical of contemporary regional or sociolinguistic variation studies is not available to the historical dialectologist. In addition extra-linguistic variables will differ according to which historical vernacular is under study and at what period. The data presented in this paper are drawn from those

collected for A Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English (LAEME);<sup>1</sup> that is from texts written in English between ca. 1150 and 1325.

Investigation of any past language state is always problematic. Firstly, the only linguistic witnesses are written texts and their survival is purely contingent. Whether a manuscript and the texts in it happen to have been preserved will depend on how they were used, perceived or valued at various times between their production and the present. Texts that were little valued could expect to be destroyed or their parchment recycled. In the case of English, the contingencies also include the success or failure of deliberate efforts at destruction by, for instance, Oliver Cromwell or Henry VIII and accidents, such as the Cottonian fire. What survives is an accidental sample where the text witnesses are varied in genre, uneven in length and patchy as to geographical origins. And since all of our informants are long dead, the size and content of the sample are not extendable.

Secondly, our witnesses are samples of written not of spoken language. The ‘native speakers’ of past stages of a language are writers and copying scribes. They produce ‘text languages’ (Fleischmann 2000: 34) that manifest variation and variability in ways that can certainly be correlated with both temporal and regional factors, but these correlations are not always simple or direct. The Middle English period, between the Norman Conquest and the rise of a written standard during the 15th and 16th centuries, is well known as a time when the native written language reflected the variation of the contemporary spoken medium more than any time before or since (*LALME* I, §1.1.2). But in a number of important ways a Middle English text language is not necessarily strictly equivalent to the spoken language that the scribe himself might have used.

Thirdly, the social settings within which the texts were produced tend to become more opaque with the passage of time – the further back we go, the less detail we can discover about our

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1 The work of the Institute for Historical Dialectology, University of Edinburgh, in which the LAEME project is based, has been supported since 2000, and is continuing to be supported, by the Arts and Humanities Research Board. I here gratefully acknowledge that vital help. I also thank the Leverhulme Trust and the British Academy for previous funding. I am grateful to my colleagues on LAEME, Roger Lass and Keith Williamson, for assistance with this paper and in all aspects of the joint venture.

witnesses. The most obvious difficulty of this sort for the study of Middle English dialects is the anonymity of the great majority of those who wrote our sources. Very often all we know about the scribe responsible for producing a text is that he did so.

For the study of linguistic variation in early Middle English, the range of accessible sociolinguistic variables is small. We are concerned only with the output, in English, of the literate – at this period a small subset of the population. Moreover, they would have been from a relatively homogeneous social milieu: adult, largely male, English-speaking, many also French-speaking, and either clerics or professionals. Most would have been primarily trained in the reading and writing of Latin, as well as being able to write French, and being familiar in some cases with more than one variety of English. More particular information is sometimes recoverable from studies of textual sources and analogues: whether the author of a text was, say, a Franciscan or Benedictine, a parish priest or a layperson. Other information may be inferred from palaeographical evidence: whether a copyist worked in a particular scriptorium, was expert in different kinds of script, adopted particular ways of arranging text on the page or, in the case of official documents, was familiar with the accepted formulae for different legal instruments. The complexities of historical context and the relevant variables are thus tied directly to the sources – and the most important for the study of early Middle English are those to do with scribal copying practices.

Angus McIntosh (1989 [1973]: 92) observes three basic strategies adopted by copying scribes. Michael Benskin and I (Benskin / Laing 1981) took this observation as the starting point for a detailed study of the kinds of linguistic mixture and layering in late Middle English texts.<sup>2</sup> For the early Middle English corpus, I have so far examined and analysed the output of over 150 scribes. Here I will summarise a range of scribal behaviours manifested in the early Middle English text corpus and (for the most part) described in more detail elsewhere. These illustrate how the varying relationships between exemplar, scribe and copy may affect the mapping of text languages in the dimensions of time, space and scribal milieu.

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2 I would like here to thank Michael, not only for his collaboration then, but also for his continued generosity in the sharing of ideas ever since.

Most of the ‘social’ variables observable in the investigation of early Middle English are those arising from two kinds of scribal strategy. The first is the design of individual spelling systems, which has been written about a great deal elsewhere (Laing 1999; Benskin 2001; Laing / Lass 2003). The second, which forms the basis for this paper, is whether or not a copying scribe is in McIntosh’s terms an A-type, which I shall here call, a ‘Literatim’, a B-type, which I shall call a ‘Translator’ or a C-type, which I shall call a ‘Mixer’.

The Literatim aims to make no changes to the spellings of his exemplar, whether or not they match his own preferred usage. The spellings in the texts he produces will therefore reflect his own only accidentally; they will always reflect the usage of the exemplar whether its origins are local or distant and whether or not it is linguistically mixed. The Translator changes the forms he finds in his exemplar, at least where they differ from his own or from those familiar to him, into his own preferred usage.<sup>3</sup> The Mixer, as his name suggests, mixes – he copies some forms accurately and translates others. His output will always represent to some degree a linguistic mixture.

The interactions between these different approaches give rise to layered linguistic complexities of various kinds – the stratigraphy of this paper’s title. A crude way of describing these contrasting strategies, adopted as shorthand in the accompanying graphics, is that a Literatim’s own scribal language is ‘switched off’ when he is copying, while a Translator’s is ‘switched on’. With a Mixer, his own scribal language is only partially engaged.

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3 The output of a consistent Translator is characterised by the appearance of the same spellings for the same functionally equivalent items (words or morphological elements) across all the texts he copies in which those items occur. ‘The same spellings’ may include a greater or lesser degree of internal variation within the scribal system. The spellings of a Translator’s copied output may not always match in every particular those that he would have chosen if he were composing the text himself. But they will always be familiar and acceptable forms known and used in his local region and at his period. The consistent Translator’s output is therefore an assemblage of forms that is plausibly representative of a single individual rather than a mixture of different usages.

## 2. From Exemplar to Copy

### 2.1. Simplest possible progression

A single exemplar in a single type of language is used to produce a single copy in a single type of language by a single scribe. We might characterise this ‘ideal’ situation pictorially:

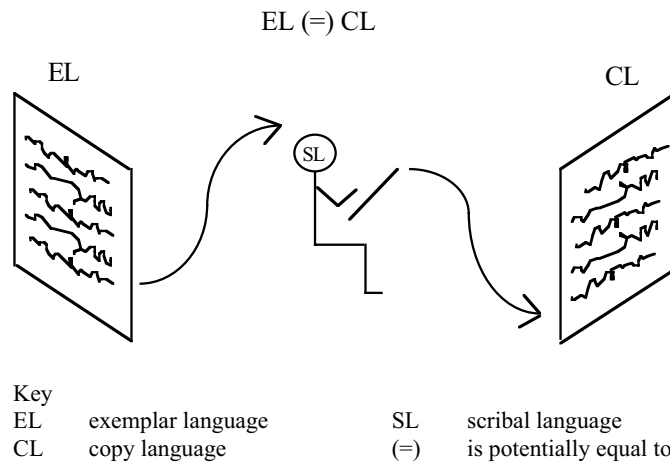


Figure 1. From exemplar to scribal copy.

This situation in Figure 1 is ‘ideal’ because except in those rare cases where the exemplar and the copy made from it both survive, we cannot know whether the exemplar was indeed written by a single scribe or in a single homogeneous type of language.<sup>4</sup> All the evidence

<sup>4</sup> Homogeneous usage is an internally consistent scribal language that may reasonably be supposed to represent a genuinely local dialect. In practice, such a definition for Middle English is a matter of empirical test: whether the assemblage of linguistic forms (with or without internal variation) can be plausibly fitted into the dialectal continuum made up of scribal usage whose local origins are already established. It may therefore also be defined negatively as ‘not a *Mischsprache*’, where a *Mischsprache* contains a proportion of forms (other than rare ‘relicts’) that are exotic in relation to the rest and which as a whole represents the usage of no single place or time.

we have is the surviving copy in a single scribal dialect. Depending on whether that scribe is a Translator or a Literatim, the language in his copy may represent his own usage or that of the scribe of the exemplar or of some previous copyist; Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the idealised results in each case. However, if the only information we have is the surviving scribal copy, we will never know which of Figures 2 or 3 reflects the ‘real’ situation.

Only if we have access to further output from that same scribe will we be able to conjecture further about the forms of his exemplar(s). If the copy is in mixed language we may conjecture that the mixture contains elements of the language of the scribe of the present copy combined with elements from that of his exemplar (see Figure 4) but without access to further work in the same hand, we cannot know if in fact it represents the work of a Literatim perpetuating some previously created *Mischsprache*.

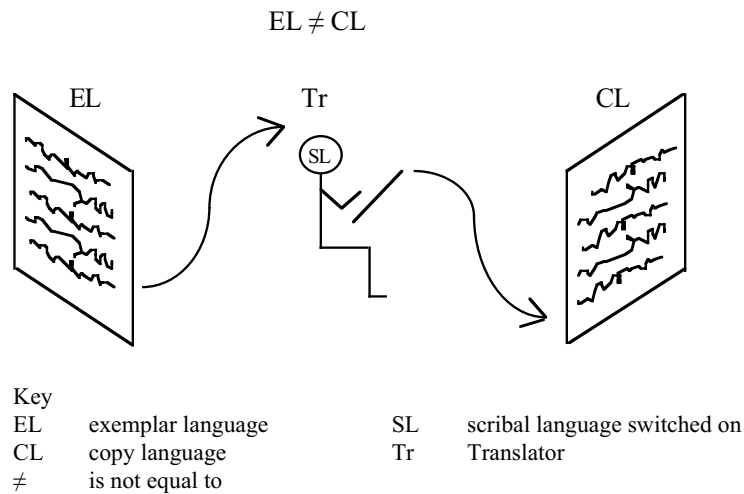


Figure 2. A Translator.

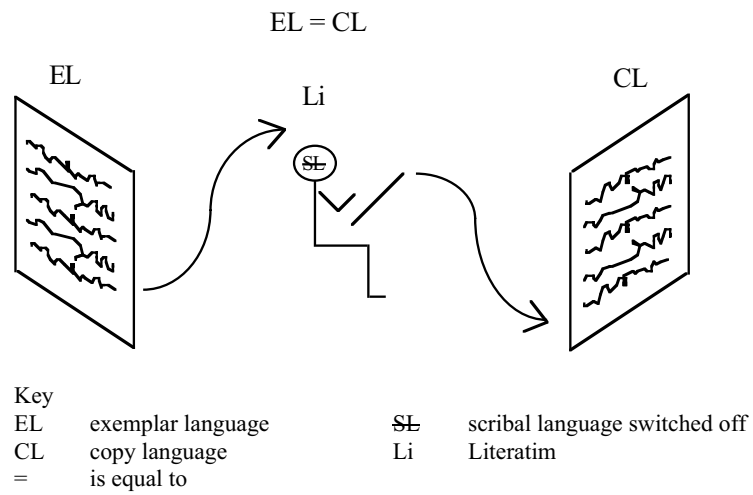


Figure 3. A Literatim.

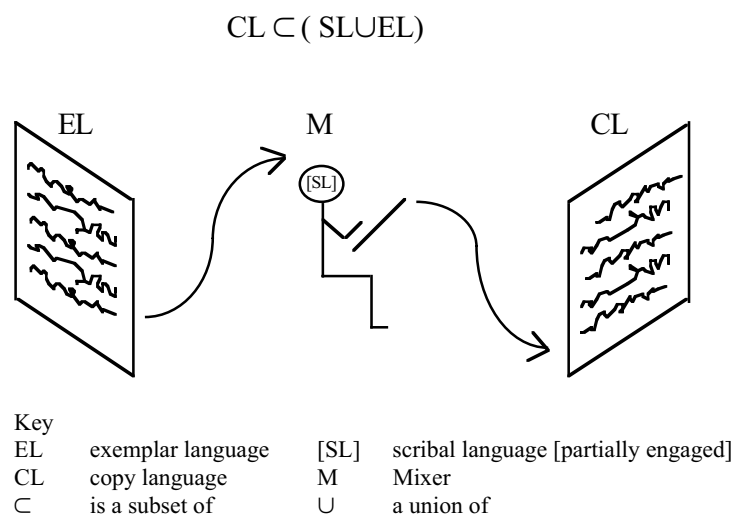


Figure 4. A Mixer.



## 2.2. *More complex progressions*

If a scribe produced copies of a number of different texts, our knowledge about the transmission of the linguistic forms in those texts is potentially increased. When different texts, or sections of texts, written in the same hand are all in the same homogeneous language, then that language is useful for dialect mapping. Its forms may be combined as a set and be plotted at the place where the scribe is known to belong, or (much more frequently) in the place within the established dialect continuum where his usage most convincingly fits.<sup>5</sup> Without access to that scribe's exemplar, however, we still do not know whether the language of his copy represents his own dialect, or (if he is a *Literatim*) that of his exemplar, or indeed (if he is one of a line of *Literatims*) of some precursor further back in the line of textual transmission.

However, if a text is in a single homogeneous language<sup>6</sup> this indicates the absence of input by any Mixer or contaminating scribe. Since by definition a *Literatim* adds nothing to the text, in practice a linguistically homogeneous output with no exotic or extraneous forms must always represent the genuine usage of some particular individual. In rare cases (e.g. Orm or Dan Michel), this is the author of the text; more frequently it will be a copyist who is a Translator. The work of a Translator produces a 'clean slate' – all traces of previous linguistic forms, whether mixed or homogeneous, are wiped away. Without access to other textual or linguistic information, Figure 2 will be the nearest we can come to representing the line of transmission for a Translator's text. For dialectal mapping, whether the scribal language belongs to the scribe who actually wrote it is in practice irrelevant. Ideally, assigning an internally homogeneous scribal language to a dot on a map implies that this particular assemblage of

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5 For detailed explanation of the theory behind the 'fit'-technique and how it works in practice, see McIntosh (1989 [1963]); Benskin (1977 and 1991); *LALME* 1, § 2.3, pp. 9-12. For a computer algorithm simulating the 'fit'-technique, see Williamson (2000).

6 A single homogeneous language (see definition in fn. 4) need not preclude considerable internal variation within the scribal language. It simply implies the absence of any usage alien to the area or period in which the scribal language belongs.

dialectal forms belonged in that place at some particular time during the period covered by the dialectal survey. However, this ideal situation is subject to a number of caveats; dots on historical dialect maps in fact represent a wide range of 'real' situations.

If a scribe's linguistic output is not homogeneous but variable, then his usage is less useful for dialect mapping. Mixed output, however, can reveal more about the scribe's copying strategy. Where a scribe produces a series of texts in mixed language, whether or not that mixture is itself variable in its constituents, he is revealed as a Mixer and further analysis will be necessary to isolate any subsets of the mixture(s) as regionally coherent assemblages.<sup>7</sup> But where he produces a series of texts that are in differing kinds of language, but each coherent and internally consistent, it suggests that he is a Literatim whose output reflects the changes of language in his exemplar(s); these changes often, though not always, coincide with changes of text. In this way a single scribe may provide text witnesses to more than one type of language, any or all of which may represent genuinely local usage and be assignable to particular places in the dialect continuum.

### 3. Types of complexity – spatial

#### 3.1. *One scribe, more than one exemplar language*

We may gain further insights into scribal strategies where we have multiple copies by different scribes of the same text or set of texts. For my first 'real' scribal illustrations I shall use a well-known example: the two scribes of the *Owl and the Nightingale* (O&N) – the Jesus scribe (J) and the Cotton scribe (C), both writing in the second

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7 For a discussion of the dialectal analysis of *Mischsprachen* see Benskin / Laing (1981: 82-85) and for some examples of such analysis McIntosh (1989 [1962]), Samuels (1988 [1985]), Samuels / Smith (1988 [1981]), Laing (1989a) and Laing / Williamson (forthc.).

half of the 13th century (Ker 1963: ix).<sup>8</sup> The Jesus and Cotton manuscripts share a number of other texts besides *O&N*.<sup>9</sup> It is generally accepted that, because J and C each include lines that the other omits, neither could have been copied from the other. It is also assumed, because of the large number of shared textual ‘errors or obscurities’ (Cartlidge 2001: xl fn. 106), that are unlikely to have originated with the author of the text, that J and C represent copies with a common ancestor, X. This probably contained not only *O&N* but also the other texts that the two manuscripts share. The text of *O&N* written by C is in two distinct, alternating types of language (C1 and C2).<sup>10</sup>

We can conclude from this that C was a Literatim, transmitting accurately from X two different kinds of language (X1 and X2), the presumption being that they were probably written in X by two different scribes. C1 and C2 are similar but localisable to two different parts of Worcs.<sup>11</sup> Neil Cartlidge (1997) has compared the language of the other Middle English lyrics written by C and concluded that two, *Doomsday* and *The Latemest Day* are in language nearly identical to C2, while the differences from both C1 and C2 language in three of the others<sup>12</sup> suggest that there were at least four scribal languages in X. J’s text of *O&N*, and indeed all the other

8 The two versions of *The Owl and the Nightingale* are in London British Library, Cotton Caligula A.ix and Oxford, Jesus College 29; see the most recent edition (Cartlidge 2001) for other editions and a full bibliography. The siglum C here refers to the scribe of the second part of the Cotton manuscript, from fols. 195r-261v, and not to the first part which contains *Lazamon's Brut* in two different hands, for which see § 5.2 and Figure 14 below.

9 The shared Middle English texts, in the order in which they appear in C, are *The Owl and the Nightingale*, *Long Life or Death's Wither-Clench*, *An Orison to Our Lady*, *Doomsday*, *The Latemest Day*, *The Ten Abuses*, *A Lutel Soth Sermun*. The two manuscripts probably also shared *Will and Wit*, which survives in C and may have been on a now lost bifolium in J.

10 C1 runs from lines 1-900 and 961-1174; C2 runs from lines 901-960 and 1175-1794 (end). See Breier (1910: 49-51); and cf. Atkins (1922: xxix-xxxi), who assigns lines 901 and 1175-1183 differently from Breier. For a summary of the differing characteristics of C1 and C2, see Cartlidge (1997: 254).

11 The first language is provisionally localised at National Grid (NG) ref. 390 262 and the second at 379 267.

12 *An Orison to Our Lady*, *Death's Wither-clench* and *A Lutel Soth Sermun*. The other two lyrics, *The Ten Abuses* and *Will and Wit* are too short to give sufficient comparative linguistic information.

Middle English in his hand, are in the same homogeneous language.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that J was a Translator, a fact that we could never be sure of without this other evidence that his exemplar contained four different kinds of language whose characteristics J translated into his own. We also have no means of knowing whether or not the Middle English texts he wrote that do not appear in the Cotton MS were in the common exemplar X or were copied from one or more different exemplars. J's usage has been assigned by M.L. Samuels to E. Herefords (See LALME LP 7440, NG 372 244).

### 3.1.1. *More than one exemplar language – one scribe, the Translator*

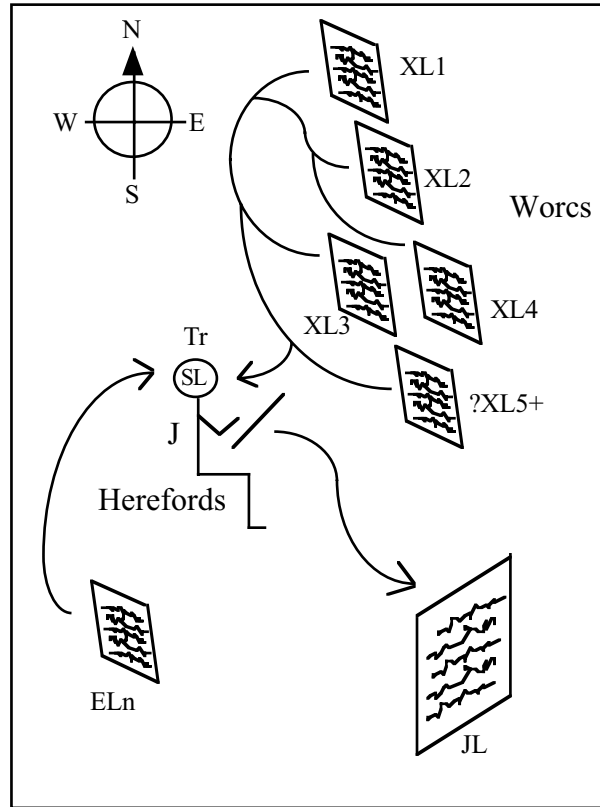
We have much more information about J than we do about most scribes producing text in homogeneous language and we can now represent him as the classic Translator (Figure 5). He uses one or more exemplars, in a number of different types of language, and produces a single linguistically homogeneous text witness, though in this case the witness is made up of a number of different actual texts. We know from C's versions of the texts common to J and C that the two main forms of language perpetuated in X belong in Worcs. J's own language is of Herefords, and regardless of whether he was working there or in Worcs or elsewhere, the language of his copy represents that area of Herefords where, we assume, he acquired his written usage. In Figure 5 and the subsequent figures showing spatial relationships between the language of scribes and their exemplars, the rectangular frame represents the relevant parts of England and the compass rose the spatial dimension.

### 3.1.2. *More than one exemplar language – one scribe, the Literatim*

C may be represented as the classic Literatim (Figure 6), producing a number of texts, one of which (*O&N*) represents two contrasting forms of localisable language, XL1 and XL2.<sup>14</sup> The different positions

13 For a full list of the texts in J's hand see Laing (1993: 145-147).

14 The other texts in C's hand are shorter than *O&N* and we cannot confidently localise their linguistic forms, though the language of *Doomsday* and *The Latemest Day* probably belongs with XL2. There are two other language types identified by Cartlidge (1997: 256): that of *An Orison of our Lady* and *Death's Wither-clench* (XL3) and that of *A Lutel Soth Sermun* (XL4).

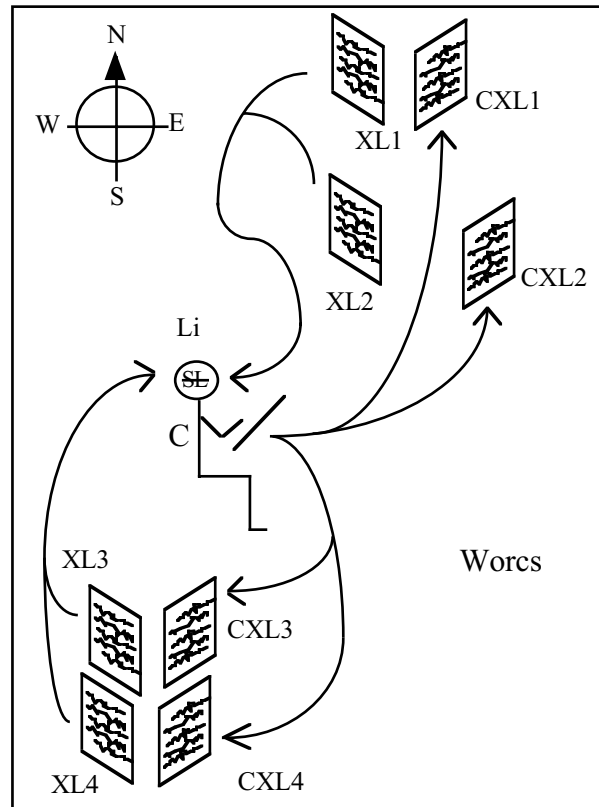


## Key

- J scribe of Oxford, Jesus College, MS 29
- Tr Translator
- SL scribal language switched on
- XL language of the exemplar X (common to shared texts in Cotton Caligula A.ix)
- JL J's language as represented in his copied texts
- EL language of exemplar(s), other than X, from one or more unspecified places

Figure 5. Oxford, Jesus College, MS 29.

of the various exemplars within the rectangle representing Worcestershire indicate that the language in each originates from a different area within the county. C himself was one person with probably only



## Key

C scribe of BL Cotton Caligula A.ix, part 2

Li Literatim

SL scribal language switched off

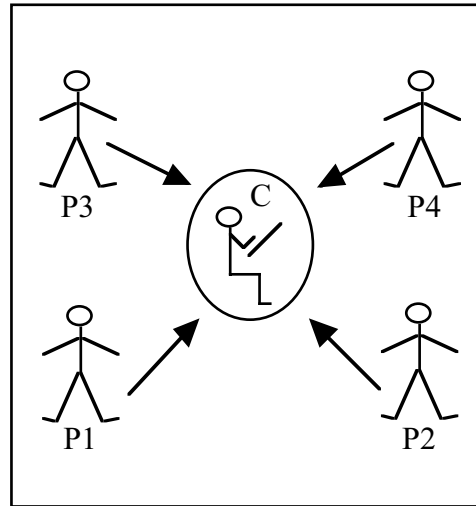
XL language of the exemplar X (common to the shared texts in Jesus 29)

CXL language of C's copied texts representing the language of X

Figure 6. London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A.ix, part 2.

one local usage that he himself would use spontaneously. Yet C, in the embodiment of his Literatim copies, appears in each separate place. It is clear that, in terms of linguistic mapping, a number of

‘places’ can converge in one person (see Figure 7).<sup>15</sup> We shall see later that in a similar sense ‘times’ can converge on individuals too.



Key

C scribe of BL Cotton Caligula A.ix  
P place in Worcestershire

Figure 7. Convergences of places on a single person.

3.1.3. *More than one exemplar language – one scribe,  
the ‘constrained’ Translator*

We know from C’s Literatim copy of *O&N* and the other lyrics in Cotton Caligula A.ix, that the versions in X must already have been in Worcestershire language. It is simpler for a scribe to translate texts if they are already written in a dialect similar to his own, because less

<sup>15</sup> In the case of C, the assemblages of forms that make up languages CXL3 and CXL4 are not securely localisable and their relationship with the assemblages making up the other two language types may only be assessed in terms of their ‘linguistic distance’ from each other and the vectoring of this distance in ‘linguistic space’ (Williamson p.c.).

has to be changed. For *O&N* and the other shared lyrics, we know that J's exemplar (X) was in a SWML type of language not widely divergent from his own Herefords usage. For the other material that he copied we do not know whether or not his exemplars were from further afield – there are no forms in any one of his texts that are alien to those in the others or indeed exotics from outside the SWML area. Either J was a thoroughgoing Translator who never allowed such relict forms from his exemplars to slip through, or else all his exemplar texts (whether or not they were all in X) were obtained by him locally and were in local language. Not all Translators use only local exemplars, however, and not all are completely thorough in converting the exemplar language.

The main scribe of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86 (D)<sup>16</sup> is a Translator like J: the same forms for the same items appear across all his texts and are localised in N Gloucs.<sup>17</sup> But comparison of the forms in the twenty-two Middle English texts in his hand reveals that his choice of spellings is sometimes 'constrained' by the spellings that he found in his various exemplars.<sup>18</sup> 'Constrained selection' (Benskin / Laing 1981: 72-75) is when a scribe suppresses some of his own habitual spellings in favour of the (functionally equivalent) others that he finds in front of him. The resulting 'constrained usage' does not include exemplar forms alien to the copyist's own language; except for the occasional relict, such exotic spellings would normally be

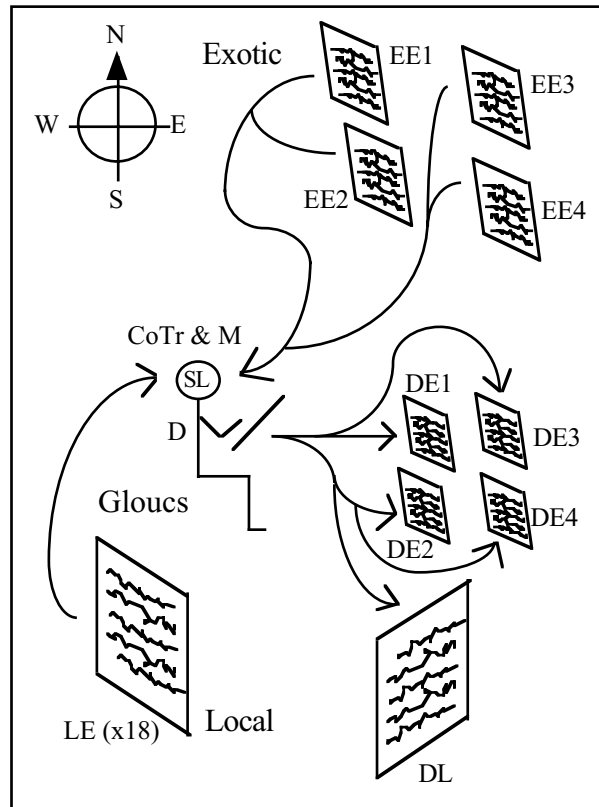
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16 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86 was written in the last quarter of the 13th century and contains over a hundred texts in Latin, French and English of which twenty-two are in English. For a description of the manuscript see Tschann / Parkes (1996). The Middle English texts are listed in Laing (1993: 129).

17 The manuscript has associations with a number of places in S Worcs and N Gloucs, including Redmarley d'Abitot; the language of the main scribe is consonant with other local usage and has therefore been placed there. See *LALME* LP 7790 and the revised LP in Laing (2000: 553-554).

18 Note that this is true in a minor way also of J's usage. But with J the degree of exemplar constraint is so slight, that were it not for the very unusual circumstance that we have a literatim copy (C) from the same exemplar of seven of J's texts for comparison, we would not know that J's usage between texts was exemplar-constrained at all.





## Key

D	main scribe of Digby 86	CoTr	constrained Translator
M	Mixer	SL	scribal language switched on
LE	local exemplar(s) for 18 texts	EE	exotic exemplar
DL	Digby language	DE	mixed Digby and exotic language

Figure 8. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86.

converted by a Translator into forms familiar to him. But when the copyist does encounter a familiar spelling for a particular word, he reproduces it unchanged, thus skewing the relative frequencies of forms that are functionally equivalent in his own repertoire. The familiar exemplar forms that he reproduces may sometimes coincide

not with those of his own spontaneous usage or ‘active repertoire’, but rather with those of his ‘passive repertoire’: that is forms that he does not himself use, but which are known to him from his own or neighbouring areas (Benskin / Laing 1981: 58-59).

Eighteen of D’s English texts are indeed in his own usage with differing relative frequencies for some exemplar-constrained forms, but the other four texts show signs of linguistic mixture (Laing 2000). In these four it is possible to isolate a subset of forms (different in each case) that are alien to D’s other usage. It appears that for these four texts D’s exemplars originated outwith the SWML area; they contain exotic relict forms and are in fact *Mischsprachen*. For one of them, *Dame Sirith*, the assemblage of relict forms is localisable in E Notts/SW Lincs. D’s copying strategies are summarised in Figure 8.

### 3.2. Mixed types of exemplar language – one scribe, the Literatim

The simplest explanation of D’s output is that most of his exemplars were local and the other four originated in each case from the area where the relevant assemblage of relicts belongs. Because D is by habit a Translator these assemblages are small and in only one case may be confidently localised as a set. We cannot be sure whether any of the four ‘exotic’ exemplars had already undergone some accommodation to SWML forms of language in the line of transmission before it came to D. But when the copyist of a surviving manuscript is a Literatim there is often more evidence of the progression of that line.

London, British Library, Cotton Titus D.xviii was written by a single scribe (T) in the second quarter of the 13th century (Mack 1963). It contains versions of *Ancrene Riwe* (AR), *Sawles Warde* (SW), *Hali Meïðhad* (HM), *þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd* (W) and *St Katherine* (SK) (Laing 1993: 81-82). The language differs between the texts, indicating that T was a Literatim. The situation is more complex than that illustrated by the Cotton scribe of *O&N* (Figure 6). Analysis reveals that T’s exemplars must themselves have represented the results of a number of different copying strategies (Laing / McIntosh 1995a). To summarise:

- (a) all but *W* (unique to Titus), exist in versions written in the SWML ‘AB’-language;<sup>19</sup>
- (b) T’s texts to a greater or lesser extent retain AB-like linguistic features that presumably go back to their source versions;
- (c) the non-AB elements in T’s texts belong much further north in the West Midlands than the AB elements;
- (d) T’s copy of *AR* (like the Cotton *O&N*) is in two kinds of language (T1 and T2) alternating with each other;
- (e) the five texts copied by T may be divided into two linguistic groups: *W* and T1 of *AR* in one group and *SW*, *HM* and *SK* in the other, with T2 of *AR* being something in between;
- (f) *W* and T1 of *AR* share a number of NWML characteristics and include a greater number of Scandinavian words than the other texts;
- (g) conversely, *SW*, *HM*, *SK* and, to a lesser extent T2 of *AR* have a very strong underlay of SWML AB-like forms while the NWML element is very slight.

The exemplar for T’s version of *AR* was probably written by two copyists alternating stints. One was most likely a NW Midlander who translated the AB-like forms in his exemplar into his own NWML dialect (resulting in T1). The other must have worked closely with the first because the changes in scribal stints do not coincide with the start of new folios. It is therefore possible that the copyist behind T2 language was also a NW Midlander but was a Mixer. This would account for the fact that T2, though much more AB-like than T1, still has more NWML features than do *SW*, *HM* and *SK*. If the language of these texts had no NWML elements we might assume that T used a different set of exemplars originating further south. But given that even these have NWML traces, a more likely explanation is that T’s exemplar was written by four different NW Midlanders: a Translator responsible for the language underlying T1;<sup>20</sup> a Mixer responsible for

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19 ‘AB language’ is that found in the A version of *Ancrene Riwe* (*Ancrene Wisse*), in Cambridge Corpus Christi College 402 and in B, the Oxford Bodleian Library, Bodley 34 versions of the Katherine Group texts: *St Katherine*, *St Margaret*, *St Juliana*, *Hali Meïðhad* and *Sawles Warde*.

20 T1 fits near the place where the borders of Salop, Cheshire and Staffs meet.

the language underlying T2; a Literatim responsible for the language of *SW*, *HM* and *SK*; and either another Translator responsible for the different NWML language of *W*<sup>21</sup> or another Literatim responsible for perpetuating the work of such a Translator.<sup>22</sup> T and his exemplars and texts are characterised in Figure 9.

### 3.3. Mixed types of exemplar language – two scribes, three places

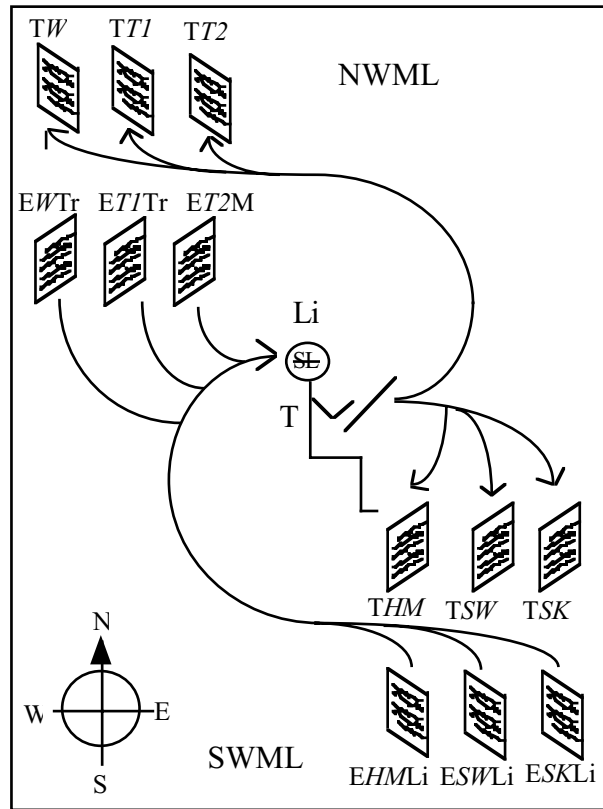
The reconstruction in Figure 9 is based on evidence at several removes but may gain credence from the existence of just such a set of circumstances evidenced by another group of early Middle English texts from the other side of the country – the *Trinity Homilies* (*TH*). As well as thirty-four prose homilies, the Trinity manuscript also contains a version of the *Poema Morale*.<sup>23</sup> Two main scribes (A and B), working in the last quarter of the 13th century, wrote alternating stints. Scribe A was responsible for *PM* and the first five and a half homilies. Thereafter the homilies are divided unevenly between scribes A and B; the changes in stint often do not coincide with a change of folio nor with the start of a new homily. The two scribes must have been working in the same place and in very close collaboration in the copying of thirty-three of the homilies. The types of language preserved by these two scribes are clearly East Midland in character, but scribe A's language is not the same as scribe B's and the language in each hand is itself variable. A third contemporary scribe (C) copied the last homily – XXXIV, which is separated from the others by two originally blank folios. Scribe C's text is in a SWML type of language, which fits best in W Berks.<sup>24</sup> We cannot be

21 The language of *W* fits where the borders of Lancs, Derbys and WRY meet.

22 See Laing / McIntosh (1995a: 254-258) for a more detailed discussion of the exemplar relationships.

23 Cambridge, Trinity College B.14.52 (335); see Morris (1873) and cf. Laing (1993: 37-38).

24 There are two possible explanations for this: either (1) C was an East Midland Literatim and his exemplar was in Berkshire language. It may have been derived from a different source from that of the other homilies or it may itself have been the work of a Literatim copying from a source in Berkshire language; or (2) Scribe C was a Berkshire scribe working in the East Midlands and was a Translator by habit.



## Key

T scribe of BL Cotton Titus D. xviii  
 Tr Translator  
~~SL~~ scribal language switched off  
 T1 Ancrone Riwle Titus Lang 1  
 W Wohunge  
 SW Sawles Warde

Li Literatim  
 M Mixer  
 E exemplar  
 T2 Ancrone Riwle Titus Lang 2  
 HM Hali Meiðhad  
 SK St Katherine

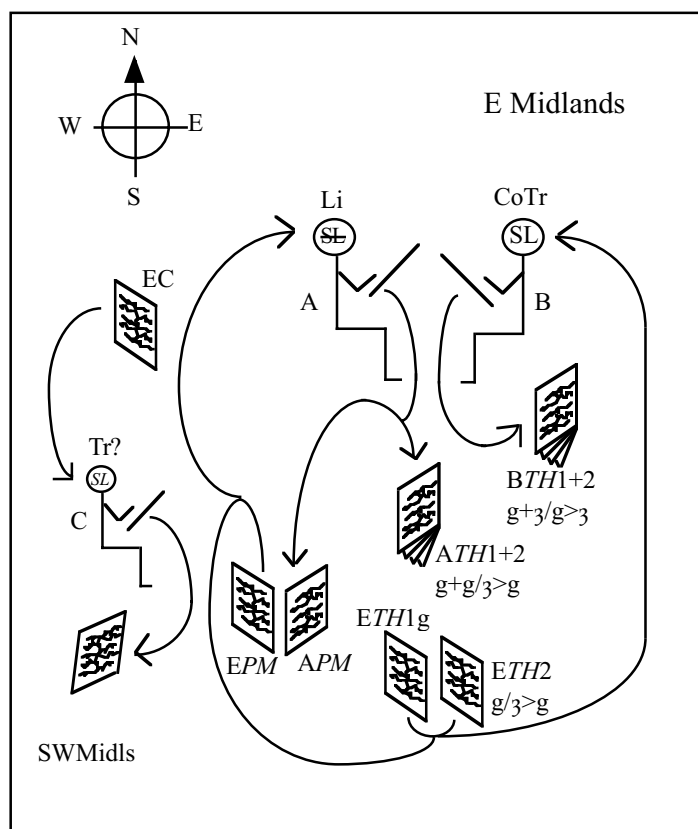
Figure 9. London, British Library, Cotton Titus D.xviii.

sure of anything further about scribe C's contribution and the following discussion is confined to the contributions of the other two

scribes. Analysis of the language of the two main scribes (Ker 1932; Laing / McIntosh 1995b) suggests the following conclusions:

- a) The exemplar for *PM* and the exemplar for *TH* I-XXXIII were in two similar but distinct forms of language, both from the East Midlands. They were probably in two different hands. The language of *PM* is much more homogeneous than that of *TH*.
- b) Between homilies XXIII and XXIV, during one of scribe B's stints, there is a shift of linguistic usage which may have coincided with another change of hand in the exemplar for *TH*. The differences are in the proportions of the various spellings used by scribe B (Laing / McIntosh 1995b: 25-28). The single most dramatic shift is the adoption by scribe B after homily XXIII of <₃>-spellings beside earlier <g>-spellings for OE *g*, whether implying [j] or [ɣ].
- c) We can infer that there were changes in language (and probably hand) in the exemplar because the changes are reflected in the surviving copy written by scribes A and B. It is clear from comparing the language of the two scribes that Scribe A may be characterised as a Literatim, leaving unchanged all the orthographic variations in his source texts – he is like the Cotton scribe of *O&N*. But Scribe B is at least to a certain extent a Translator. He modifies the language of his source where it differs significantly from his own preferred usage, and only leaves unchanged those forms with which he is familiar. Because the resulting linguistic shifts in his copy are for the most part changes in the proportions of his use of the various spellings available in his dialect for functional equivalents, scribe B may be characterised as an 'exemplar constrained' Translator, more like the Jesus scribe of *O&N*, or like the main scribe of Digby 86. This conclusion is supported by scribe B's response to the shift in his exemplar from <g>-spellings to <₃>-spellings for [j] or [ɣ]. We can assume that both spellings were familiar and acceptable to scribe B. Finding no <₃>-spellings in his exemplar before homily XXIV he had no cause to write any himself. Coming across them in his exemplar thereafter, however, he reproduces them wherever he finds them and increasingly uses

- <3>-spellings instead of <g>-spellings (presumably as his own preferred usage) even though the evidence from the Literatim scribe A's later stints suggests that the exemplar ceased to have <3>-spellings after about homily XXX.
- d) The shift of language between homilies XXIII and XXIV does not happen during one of scribe A's stints. But where he picks up again after the linguistic shift in scribe B's contribution, his language does show clear differences from that of his contributions before the shift. There are therefore two kinds of language within each scribe's copies of *TH* – A1 and A2 and B1 and B2. We assume that the contrasts between A1 and A2 more clearly reflect the differences in the underlying exemplar than do the slighter changes between B1 and B2. In neither case are the differences great enough to suggest that the two forms of language belong in two different places.
  - e) The language of Scribe A's version of *PM*, representing the language of the exemplar for *PM*, shows a number of differences from his *TH* language. One of the characteristics of *APM* is <a>-spellings for words with OE  $\bar{a}$ , both  $\bar{a}^1$  and  $\bar{a}^2$ . Language *APM* has been placed firmly within the <a> for  $\bar{a}$  area (Ek 1975: 56) in W Central Essex. Language *ATH*, which has many more <e>-spellings in this context has been placed nearer the periphery of the <a> for  $\bar{a}$  area, in NW Essex near the Cambs and Suffolk border. Language *BTH* has many more northerly features and only rare, relict occurrences of <a> for OE  $\bar{a}$ . It has been placed in West Central Suffolk outside the <a> for  $\bar{a}$  area. *BTH* represents active B-usage and probably also passive B-language from the surrounding area. The various language types and copying strategies observable in *TH* are summarised in Figure 10.



Key

A scribe A of *Trinity Homilies*  
 C scribe C of *Trinity Homilies*  
 Tr Translator  
 E exemplar  
~~SL~~ scribal language switched off  
 PM *Poema Morale*  
 ETH1 exemplar language for *TH1*  
 ATH1 *TH* scribe A language 1  
 BTH1 *TH* scribe B language 1

B	scribe B of <i>Trinity Homilies</i>
CoTr	constrained Translator
Li	Literatim
SL	scribal language switched on
<i>SL</i>	scribal language status uncertain
<i>TH</i>	<i>Trinity Homilies</i>
<i>ETH2</i>	exemplar language for <i>TH2</i>
<i>ATH2</i>	<i>TH</i> scribe A language 2
<i>BTH2</i>	<i>TH</i> scribe B language 2

Figure 10. Cambridge Trinity College B.14.52, *Trinity Homilies*.



#### 4. Types of complexity – Temporal

The previous examples have all been analysed with reference mainly to the spatial plane. But Middle English scribes were not only expected to produce copies of texts from a variety of different places and in widely divergent dialects, they also had sometimes to create versions of texts for which their exemplars had been written in earlier forms of English. If the time scale was very different this could cause considerable problems, as is apparent from the often garbled versions of Old English charters copied into 12th- and 13th-century cartularies. If the forms of language were less archaic matters were obviously easier, just as geographically local exemplars proved simpler to copy or to translate than those in regionally exotic forms of language. There was no reason for a competent Translator to change his normal strategy when copying older forms of language. So Translators wipe the slate clean of temporal variants just as they do with spatial ones. But in the work of Literatims, we can sometimes see that different times may converge on individuals just as different places can.

##### 4.1. More than one exemplar language – one scribe, the Literatim

The *Lambeth Homilies*<sup>25</sup> were written by a single scribe (L) in about 1200. There are sixteen prose homilies and two verse texts: an exposition on the *Pater Noster* and an incomplete version of *Poema Morale*. Five of the homilies are versions of ones found also in the Trinity Homilies. Scribe L writes two different kinds of language, both of SWML origin. Celia Sisam's (1951) groundbreaking study shows that the *Lambeth Homilies* (LH) have a dual history. The texts may be divided into two groups evincing different linguistic characteristics. Sisam infers that scribe L was a Literatim copying the work of two different scribes. Judging from the language shifts in LH, these exemplar scribes were not working in close proximity like scribes A and B of TH. In scribe L's copy, the language shifts always

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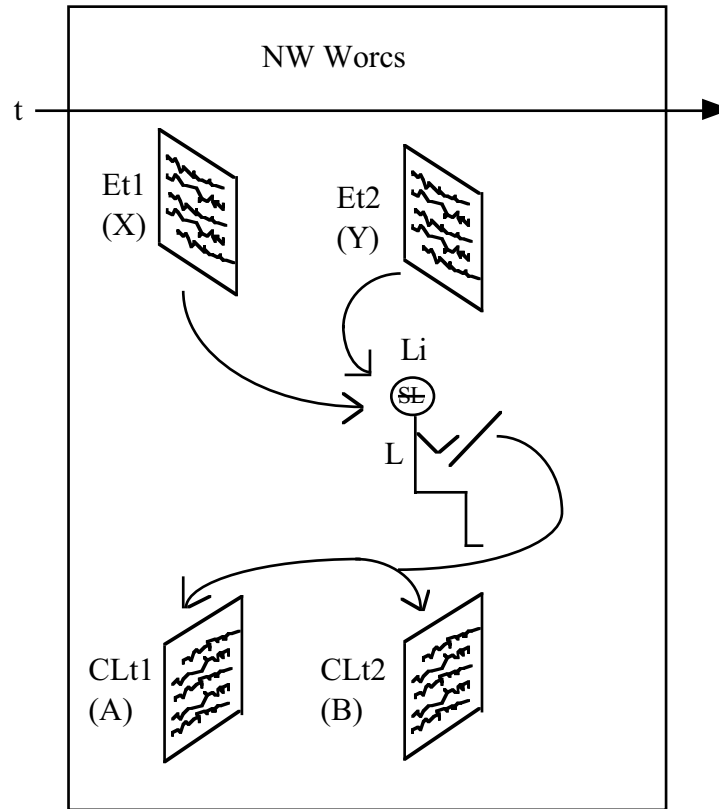
25 London, Lambeth Palace Library 487, fols. 1r-59v and *Poema Morale* (fols. 59v-65r) in the same hand: see Morris (1868) and cf. Laing (1993: 111).

coincide with ends and beginnings of sermons, suggesting that he was drawing his material from two distinct groups of sermons in at least two different exemplar manuscripts. Sisam puts sermons I-V and IX-XIII in Group A and sermons VI-VIII, XIV-XVII and *PM* in Group B. Sermons IX, X and part of XI from Group A in *LH* go back to known sermons by Ælfric while sermon II, also from Group A, incorporates much of a sermon by Wulfstan. The sermons in Group A are characterised by older forms of English than those in Group B, and Sisam conjectures that they go back to a manuscript, which she designates X, of older origin than the source for the other sermons. The source for Group B Sisam designates MS Y, and this contained the two verse texts of clearly Middle English origin. It is unlikely that Y contained any sermons of Old English origin.

The scribes of X and Y, or some precursor, must already have imposed local modifications on this composite collection before scribe L made his faithful copy of their combined work. Sisam observes: “it must be admitted that, though the Lambeth scribe copied his sources closely, Groups A and B do not seem to differ radically in dialect. Group A, it is true, shows an older language, but it is hard to find any point of dialect other than date which consistently differentiates the two” (1951: 111). Here different times converge on the Literatim scribe L in a single SWML location – the two forms of language have been fitted provisionally in NW Worcs. So scribe L is one man representing one place at two different times. The situation is summarised in Figure 11. In the previous figures the rectangular frame and the compass rose represent the spatial dimension. In Figures 11 and 12 the rectangle indicates a single place and has a time axis running through it representing the temporal dimension.

#### 4.2. *The Ormulum*

One of the main desiderata for a historical dialectologist is written material that fulfils the ideal of representing the language of one person in one place at one time. We have already seen that the texts of thoroughgoing Translators (or the work of Literatims copying such texts) provide this necessity. We have also seen how the ideal is often modified by differing copying strategies.



## Key

L scribe of *Lambeth Homilies*  
~~SL~~ scribal language switched off  
 E exemplar  
 Y exemplar of ME origin  
 A group A sermons

Li Literatim  
 t time  
 X exemplar of OE origin  
 CL copy language  
 B group B sermons

Figure 11. London, Lambeth Palace MS 487, *Lambeth Homilies*.

The only certain way, it would seem, of gaining the ideal is to have access to a holograph. *The Ormulum* is one such.<sup>26</sup> We know very little about the author, Orm (or Ormin), except what he tells us himself and what we can glean from studying his one holograph manuscript with its remarkable orthography. Orm tells us that he was an Augustinian canon. His language has a large proportion of Scandinavian loan words suggesting an origin in a heavily Norse settled area, but the native forms of his language are East Midland rather than northern. In combination, Orm's linguistic forms fit best in SW Lincs (McIntosh 1989 [1963]:29). Using the linguistic evidence as a starting point, Malcolm Parkes (1983: 125-127) argues that Orm might have been based in the Arroaisian Abbey of Bourne. The assumption is that his spoken language and the written vernacular based on it were learned not too far away. Parkes also argues, from a detailed study of Orm's script, that Orm would have been writing *The Ormulum* early in the last quarter of the 12th century (Parkes 1983: 115-125).

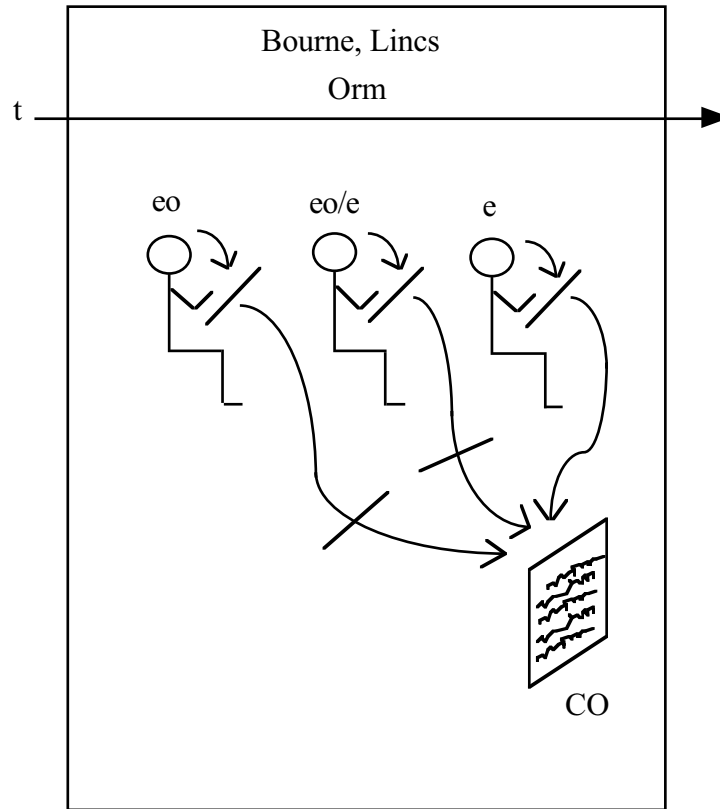
It seems that with *The Ormulum* we may have our historical dialectologist's ideal scenario – the linguistic forms of a particular person working in a particular place at a particular time. But every scribal language is a product of what that scribe has learned during his life and education up to the time of writing. It will be made up of conservative features retained from his early years or from his reading of earlier texts and also, at least in some cases, innovative features arising from changes observed by the scribe in his own spoken usage and/or in others' spoken or written usages.<sup>27</sup> All scribal outputs to some degree represent linguistic time-lines for their place of origin.

For most scribes, without recourse to comparison with other scribal dialects, we will not be able to tell which linguistic forms are

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26 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 1. See Holt (1878) and for a full bibliography and detailed manuscript description, the website *The Ormulum Project* by Johannesson listed under references.

27 The same is true of spoken language at any period. We all acquire new forms of language throughout our lives – though (just like medieval scribes) some are more receptive of innovation than others. If we move about and live in different places, we are also likely to pick up locutions, whether temporarily or permanently, from the places where we have lived. Notice my (quite natural) use of 'outwith' on p. 67 above: I was brought up in Oxford but have lived in Edinburgh for nearly 30 years.



## Key

- t time  
 eo early Orm – using <eo> spellings  
 eo/e time when Orm changes spelling practice and corrects <eo> to <e>  
 e time when corrections are complete  
 CO corrected *Ormulum*

Figure 12. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 1, *The Ormulum*.

conservative and perhaps therefore recessive and which innovative and perhaps thereafter progressive. With *The Ormulum* we can see such processes within the text itself. Orm seems to have worked on his text over a considerable period. Nils-Lennart Johannesson (*The*

*Ormulum Project*) considers that Orm may have been working on his text for two decades or more and he detects five different stages of orthographic and textual revision. One very clear-cut orthographic modification was Orm's decision after about 13000 lines to write words with OE *eo* (long or short) with <e> rather than with <eo> which was his originally preferred spelling. Not only did he switch from <eo> to <e> but he subsequently went back over the text and attempted (with almost total success) to correct all previous <eo> to <e> by erasure of the <o> in each case (Burchfield 1956: 80-83). *The Ormulum* therefore represents language along a time-line rather than at a fixed point in time: see Figure 12.

## 5. Types of simplicity

### 5.1. Exemplar language(s) unknown, one copyist

It may seem that we have come a long way from the simple progression from exemplar to copy characterised in Figure 1. But in fact there are many early Middle English examples of texts in a single hand and a single type of language. As long as this language is internally consistent we can proceed with confidence to assign it to a place in the dialectal continuum and to plot its forms on the map.

### 5.2. Exemplar language(s) unknown, two or more copyists, similar language, one place

Sometimes there is more than one scribal witness to the same kind of language. This most often happens with two or more contributors to the same manuscript. The possible explanations are either that the

scribes are Literatims sharing the copying of an exemplar in one kind of language or perhaps that they are Translators trained in the same scriptorium to write very similarly.<sup>28</sup> Examples of more than one scribe writing similar language that is assignable to a single place and time are:

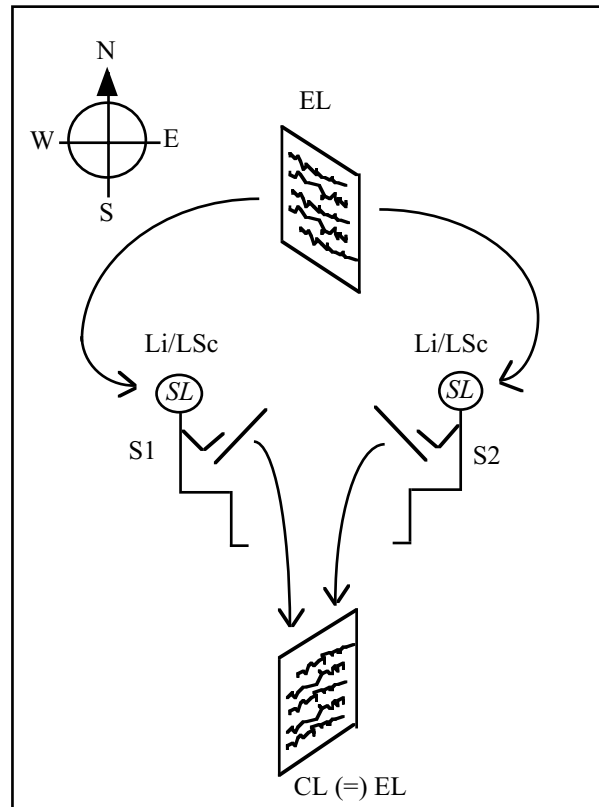
- (a) the two alternating scribes of *Vices and Virtues*<sup>29</sup> dated to the first quarter of the 13th century and placed in W Essex;
- (b) the two scribes of London, British Library, Cotton Nero A.xiv, the first of whom writes a version of *Ancrene Riwe* (Day 1952), the second the Wooing Group of texts (Thompson 1958). These are dated to the second quarter of the 13th century and placed in W Worcs;
- (c) the three scribes contributing to the Katherine Group of texts in London, British Library, Royal 17 A xxvii (Wilson 1938; d'Ardenne / Dobson 1981; Mack 1934; d'Ardenne 1961), dated 1220-1230 and placed near the Salop/Worcs border.

This scribal scenario is characterised in Figure 13.

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28 We have to posit a mixture of these two explanations to explain the well-known AB language. This is the unusual circumstance of two different scribes writing the same language in two *different* manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 402, *Ancrene Wisse* (A) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 34 (B), the Katherine Group of texts. It is generally accepted that scribe B is a Literatim who copied this particular form of language accurately from his exemplar and failed to write it where the exemplar had a different form of language, i.e. in the first few folios (18r-21r line 19) of *St Margaret* (Mack 134: xiv). The language of A shows no such variation, however, and this suggests that it is the work of a Translator. This in its turn suggests that the A scribe was himself the designer of so-called AB language and that he (or a Literatim copyist of his work) provided the now lost exemplar for all but the first few folios of *St Margaret*, copied by the B scribe.

29 London, British Library, Stowe 34. See Holthausen (1888, 1921) and cf. Laing (1993: 106-107).



## Key

- S1 1st scribe, e.g. of BL Stowe 34 or BL Cotton Nero A.xiv  
 S2 2nd scribe, ditto (note that in BL Royal 17.A.xxvii there are 3 such scribes)  
 Li/LSc Literatim or writer of local scriptorium usage  
 SL scribal language status uncertain  
 EL exemplar language  
 CL copy language  
 (=) is potentially equal to

Figure 13. Types of simplicity – multiple scribes, similar language.



5.3. *Simplicity made complicated – exemplar language(s) probably variable, two copyists, similar but non-identical languages, one place*

The C version of *O&N*, along with the other lyrics in the same hand and from the same source, occupies the second part of BL Cotton Caligula A.ix. The first part contains Lazamon's *Brut*, a verse chronicle of over 16,000 lines on the history of Britain. It was copied by two scribes (see Appendix, §1), dated probably to the last quarter of the thirteenth century (Ker 1963: vi). The two scribes alternated, each scribe providing two main stints, though scribe A's are much shorter than scribe B's. Scribe A copies less than 1,600 verse lines, while scribe B provides nearly 14,500.<sup>30</sup> Scribe A's hand is neat and regular, while scribe B's is variable in size, neatness, pen cut, evenness, alignment on the page and even in the choice of line fillers (see Appendix, §2). His choice of letter shapes themselves is variable to such an extent that most of hand A's characteristics are present in hand B, making separation of their stints sometimes problematic. Profligacy in script does not always march with profligacy of spelling, but in my experience a scribe who is most strongly influenced by the spellings he is copying – a Literatim – is more likely also to adopt features of script and formatting from his exemplar. Whereas a Translator, who must carry in his head larger elements than the letter, or even than the word, in order accurately to translate from one dialect into another, is less likely to be influenced by the minutiae of the exemplar script. Judging from the script alone we might conjecture that scribe A is more likely to be a Translator and scribe B a Literatim. But does the linguistic evidence support this conjecture?

It is generally accepted that the two scribes' languages are very similar and that they are likely to belong to the same place, or at least are not far distant from each other. They are both placed provisionally in NW Worcs at Areley Kings (adjoining Stourport-on-Severn), which is where Lazamon himself tells us he came from

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30 These are counted from those of the EETS edition (Brook / Leslie 1963, 1978). Both scribes write in double columns whose line ends do not match the much longer verse lines of the chronicle. Madden's (1847) edition prints the text in short half lines.

(Ernle3e). The languages of the two copying scribes are consonant with later material from that area. It is possible however that they should be placed somewhat further south nearer to Worcester (which is in any case only about 10 miles distant), there being strong similarities also with the more nearly contemporary language of the Tremulous Hand.

Frances McSparran (forthc.)<sup>31</sup> has made a detailed analysis of the differences between the usages of the two scribes and how their forms vary through the text. She says:

Faced with the knowledge that the author's original, and the current copy, and most likely the exemplar, will all have used written forms current in North West Worcestershire in their respective times, we may expect to find a lot of overlap in the selection of forms. [...] both scribes have employed similar repertoires of spelling forms overall, but clear differences between them emerge reflecting (i) different preferences for which of their selection of variants they were most likely to use for a given item, (ii) forms used by one scribe but not the other, and (iii) the likelihood of differing responses from each to the forms they met in their exemplar [...]. [...] the scribes are working from an exemplar, copied I believe, by several hands, [...] some of the large scale shifts in Scribe B's preferences have been conditioned by the choices made by different predecessors in his exemplar.

Even though his text is much shorter than scribe B's, scribe A's usage does allow for considerable internal variation. His choice of spellings is however less variable than scribe B's usage which shows unusually high numbers of variants for functional equivalents. This is especially obvious in the early part of scribe B's contribution as scribe B takes over from scribe A. Assuming that the exemplar for both scribes was written in local Worcestershire language, and given the shortness of scribe A's second stint, it is difficult to assess whether any of scribe A's usage is constrained by his exemplar. There are however no significant changes in his usage between his first stint and his second, and rare variants present at the beginning of his text are abandoned as he gets into his copying stride. The most likely explanation is that scribe A was a Translator who did not need to adapt all the forms of his exemplar because many were familiar to him, but who did

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31 I am grateful to Frances for sending me a prepublication copy of her paper.

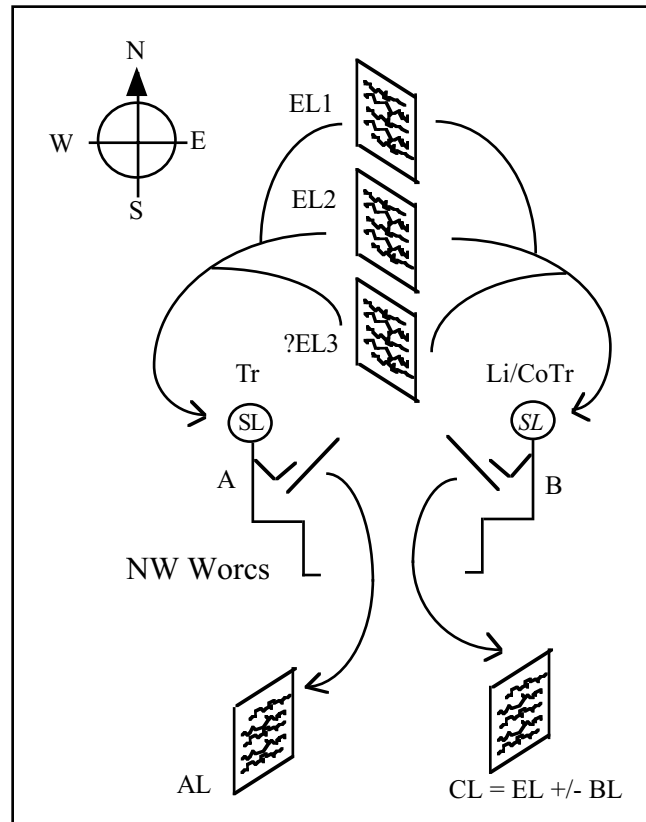
increasingly change less familiar forms to his own preferred usage as he settled into translating mode.

Scribe B's work, by contrast, has all the hallmarks of a scribe whose usage is strongly constrained by that of his exemplar; he is much more of a Literatim than he is a Translator. His work suggests, in a way that scribe A's contribution partly disguises, that the exemplar's language (at least in the first half of the text) was very rich in internal variation. Scribe B's text also reveals that there were definable shifts in usage in the exemplar. McSparran (forthc.) identifies in scribe B's contribution a number of words for which his spellings shift over the course of a few folios. She detects no absolute break such as we find in the Cotton *O&N*, but the cumulative effect of the spelling changes strongly suggests that there was a change of language (and probably scribe) in the exemplar at about line 7000. She thinks that there may have been another scribal change in the exemplar at around line 10000. McSparran observes:

There is a resurgence from this point on of a number of spelling forms otherwise found only near the beginning of the text. Since Scribe B is unlikely to have reintroduced spontaneously toward the end of this work forms which he had used briefly and dropped after the beginning, it seems that these forms must have been in his source, and that he was once again adjusting to the system of variants for items used by another hand.

She does not suggest, though it must surely be a possibility, that the exemplar itself could have been written by two alternating scribes, the first contributing lines 1 to about 7000, the second lines 7000 to about 10000 and the first taking over again (thus accounting for the return of 'early' forms in scribe B's copy) from about 10000 to the end. Judging by scribe B's own output we may infer that all these exemplar scribes' dialects were similar and that at least the first scribe's usage had considerable internal variation

McSparran considers that like scribe A, scribe B gradually settles into his copying stride at the beginning of each stint, though he takes much longer to do so than scribe A does. I think it possible, however, that scribe B has a very strong tendency towards literatim copying and that there may be an earlier change in exemplar scribe coinciding with where McSparran assumes scribe B to have 'worked in' to his text. Much more work needs to be done before it can be



## Key

A	scribe A of Lazamon's <i>Brut</i>	B	scribe B of Lazamon's <i>Brut</i>
Tr	Translator	Li/CoTr	Literate or constrained Translator
SL	scribal language switched on	SL	scribal language status uncertain
AL	scribe A's language	BL	scribe B's language
CL	copy language	EL	exemplar language

Figure 14. London, BL, Cotton Caligula A.ix, part 1, Lazamon's *Brut*.

established whether or not this is the case. Meantime it is clear that scribe B is either a Literatim whose own spontaneous usage is not at

issue but whose copy language varies with that of his exemplar, or that he is sufficiently constrained by his exemplars' forms that he must be counted a Mixer. The mixture that he produces, whether or not it contains elements from his own spontaneous usage, is however entirely local in its ingredients. As with the scribes of *Vices and Virtues* and the Nero and Royal manuscripts discussed in 5.1 and illustrated in Figure 13 above, we are dealing with multiple scribes working in close contact, and probably with local exemplars, producing texts in similar languages that belong in the same place. But here the two copyists have different approaches to their exemplar. The copying practices of the two Lazamon scribes are summarised, as far as present evidence allows, in Figure 14.

## 6. Miscellaneous types of complexity (work in progress)

### 6.1. Source language non-English

It is rare to find a Middle English text for which we can be sure of the place of origin, the name of the author or the name of the copying scribe. The *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (Morris 1866; Gradon 1979) is therefore all the more extraordinary. This is a translation of the *Somme le Roi* of 1280. We know from the colophon on fol. 94r and a statement on fol. 2r that the manuscript was written “*of his oʒene hand*” by Dan Michel (DM) of the Northgate (the parish of St Mary Northgate in Canterbury). It is assumed by most scholars that DM was himself responsible for the translation, though this is not a certain conclusion from the wording of the colophon. Most of the manuscript (fols. 13r-96v) is in DM's hand and he tells us that it was finished on 27th October, 1340 at St Augustine's Canterbury.<sup>32</sup> DM has been identified as a secular clerk who was ordained priest in 1296.<sup>33</sup> By the time he

32 “¶ Ymende. þet þis boc is uolued ine þe eue of þe holy apostles Sy\mon an Iudas, of ane broþer of þe cloystre of sauynt austin \ of Canterburi , Ine þe yeare of our lhordes beringe 1340” fol. 94r.

33 See Gradon (1979: 12) and references there cited.

came to write the *Ayenbite* he must have been an old man of 70 years or more, and the language may therefore be taken as representative of the late 13th rather than the mid-14th century. He himself tells us (fol. 94r) “þet þis boc is y-write mid engliss of kent”. After *The Ayenbite* there follow also in English and in DM’s hand, *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria* and *Creed* (fol. 94r); Pseudo-Anselm *De Custodia Interioris Hominis* (fols. 94v-96v); and two more versions of *Ave Maria* (fol. 96v).

Dan Michel, even more than Orm, could be seen to qualify as the historical dialectologist’s dream as a text witness for early Middle English. But as always there are complications. Dan Michel was not composing the *Ayenbite* entirely out of his own head; he was translating into “þe engliss of kent” from a French original and for the much shorter Pseudo-Anselm *De Custodia*, from a Latin original. At a period when a great deal of French lexis is in the process of being borrowed into English, it is obvious that making close use of a French original could lead to straightforward carryovers from source to translation. An interesting insight into the phenomenon is found in the Edinburgh College of Physicians version of *Cursor Mundi*. At lines 21631-34 (Morris 1877: 1239) the Edinburgh scribe writes:

Bot mani of trouþe es sa unselie  
 Þaine trou noȝte bot þai se wiþ eie  
 And þat unneþis wiltai trou  
 Wiþpoutin singne de grant uertu

The lapse into French in line 21634 was presumably triggered by ‘sign’ and ‘virtue’, both by this period established French borrowings into English. It may even signal a failure of the original author of *Cursor Mundi* to translate from his French source at this point, suggesting that the Edinburgh version may be very close to such an original version. The other surviving texts of *Cursor Mundi* all have variants on “signe of grete vertu”.

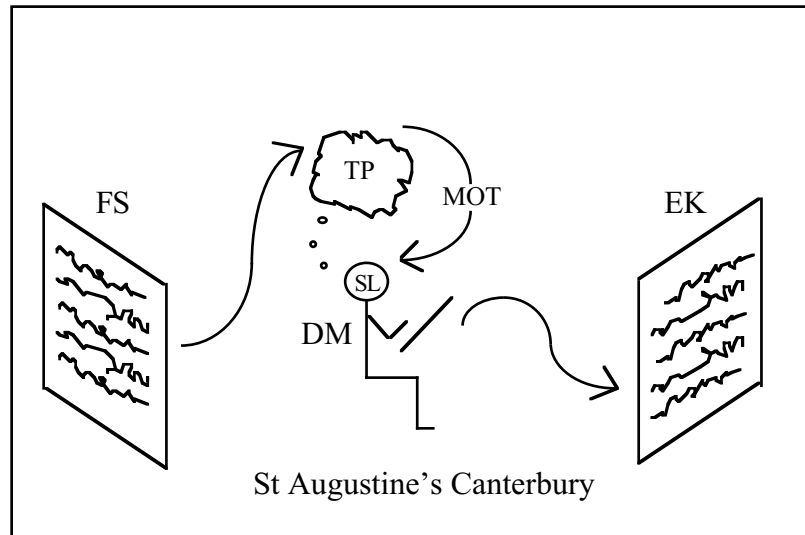
DM has a sizeable element of originally French lexis in his vocabulary. His spelling system implies that he belongs in an area that had voicing of initial fricatives.<sup>34</sup> One intriguing feature of his

34 For references to the extensive literature on this see Laing (1998: 279 fn. 18).

orthography is that “originally voiceless *f*, *s* are spelt *u*, *z*, except in the case of French loan words” (Gradon 1979: 43 and cf. Smith 2000, Scahill 2000). As DM is not completely consistent in making this distinction, and as voiced medial fricatives, either in native words or in words of French origin appear with both <f>/<s> spellings and <u>/<z> spellings, the inference is that DM made no distinction in pronunciation between the two types. His orthographic system seems to be a blend of the traditions of Old French and of his native *engliss of kent*. As far as DM’s translation is concerned, Gradon (1979: 55-56) considers that: “while rendering the French very closely, the *Ayenbite* is translated into a generally acceptable English as far as morphology and syntax are concerned.” The same is true of his version of *De Custodia*. But the closeness of the translation is likely to have influenced DM’s choice of lexis and sentence structure to make his texts different in detail from what any spontaneous composition by him might have shown. This situation is summarised in Figure 15.

## 6.2. Source language a textual tradition in a circumscribed area

Another kind of textual and scribal interaction in early Middle English needs more investigation: that is, when multiple versions of a work survive that are textually closely related and whose copy languages also fit close to one another geographically. An example is the various versions of the *South English Legendary* placed in *LALME* in Gloucs and in neighbouring parts of Oxon, Wilts and Berks. Four of these *SEL* versions are early enough to be included in the *LAEME* corpus. When such scribal usages provide all or most of the data for a circumscribed area we have to ask what it is that we are mapping. Is it genuinely local language or the language of a textual tradition? A similar question could be asked about the three early versions of *Cursor Mundi*. In practice, as I hope I have already demonstrated, whether a text language belongs in its entirety to a particular person does not need to matter. Provided that the relevant text languages are



Key			
DM	Dan Michel	FS	French source
SL	scribal language switched on	TP	translation process
MOT	mixed orthographic traditions	EK	'engliss of kent'

Figure 15. London, British Library, Arundel 57, *Ayenbite of Inwyte*.

each homogeneous and as long as the (perhaps minor) linguistic differences from the others allow the whole of which they form a part to be distinguished within the regional continuum, they may safely be mapped. These clusterings of text languages are precisely what we would expect to find resulting from the work of local scribes using exemplars from neighbouring areas.

I consider that the linguistic relationships between the surviving copies of *Ancrene Riwe* may be explained in much the same way. But the complexities arising from the considerable authorial supervision and revision of the text and from the powerful scholarly perception of AB language as a literary standard require detailed argument and must be considered elsewhere.



## 7. Questions and Summary

Q: What does a point on a dialect map represent and what *could* it represent? Is it a real spatial projection or a pseudo spatial projection?

A: It depends. It could represent:

- a) the language of a particular person, time and place, e.g. Dan Michel (but with French influence or Orm (but on a time line).
- b) the language of a Translator: the language of a particular person time and place though it may need to be fitted (e.g. Jesus 29). There may be fuzziness round the edges of the point because of constrained selection, Cf, Digby 86, *Trinity Homilies*, scribe B.
- c) the language of a Literatim: the scribe is irrelevant – the person ‘becomes’ the place(s) (e.g. the Cotton scribe of the *Owl and the Nightingale*, *Trinity Homilies*, scribe A) and/or the time(s) (e.g. the scribe of the *Lambeth Homilies*). The language also needs to be fitted.
- d) a composite place: more than one scribe is mapped there (e.g. *Vices and Virtues*, BL Royal 17 A xxvii, BL Cotton Nero A.xiv).
- e) a composite place showing different scribal approaches: e.g. Lazamon A scribes A and B. Both points are fuzzy edged, B more than A.
- f) the languages of a local textual tradition: usage is familiar both from knowledge of the text and from local familiarity (e.g. *South English Legendary*, *Cursor Mundi* and *Ancrene Riwe*)

A point on a map can be ontologically many things or indeterminate. This indeterminacy may be a property of supposed synchrony in objects that are historically evolved and in the process of evolving. For historical dialectology linguistic maps are still a very powerful way to display the complexities of time, space and the variable stratigraphy applicable to different vernaculars at different periods. Keith Williamson’s paper in this volume illustrates some of the ways a linguistic atlas can now extend its domain from static displays and become something more dynamic and interactive.

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## Appendix

The two scribes of British Library, Cotton Caligula A.ix, part 1:  
Lazamon's *Brut*

### *1. Identification of hands*

The two hands were first identified by Madden (1847). Using the old foliation he suggests that hand B takes over from hand A at fol. 16v and that A reappears at fol. 86 “for two and a half pages” after which the second hand recurs. This opinion is endorsed in Thompson et al. (1903: plate 86) where it is stated (using the new foliation) that the first hand breaks off at fol. 18v col. 2 line 6 and recurs on fols. 88-89 col. 1 line 11.

At one time (Laing 1993: 70) I considered the entire text to be in a single hand. Further scrutiny has persuaded me that Madden's view is in fact correct. In scribe B's contribution there is a great deal of variability in the cut of the pen and in the neatness, size, spacing and duct of the script. This led me to the conviction that since all the letter-shapes in scribe A's contributions seemed to be replicated somewhere in hand B that there was no necessity to assume a change of hand at all. But the apparent inability of scribe B to maintain regularity in his script must be set against the considerable regularity evident for the stretches assigned to scribe A. It is implausible to assume that a single scribe suddenly became a great deal more variable and profligate in his choice of letter-shapes when he has shown himself capable of maintaining a regular and smaller set of choices for a stretch of 18 fols. The shapes of both two-lobed and one-lobed forms of the letter 'a' and that of the letter 'g' are also distinct in the two hands. Scribe B has a habit of making the ascender of 'd' longer than that in hand A and often has it at a sharper angle. The short ascender of scribe A's 'd' is extremely regular.

What seems not to have been recorded is that hand B makes its first, albeit brief, appearance on fol. 17v where it contributes the first four lines of column 1 before scribe A again resumes until fol. 18v column 2. There is also another appearance of hand A before its

return at fol. 88ra, which seems to have been unnoticed. Occasionally scribe B writes in a smaller, neater hand than is usual for him. These stretches perhaps correspond to the beginnings of new scribal stints and certainly involve a finer cut of pen. Because of their comparable size and duct, these stints look superficially more like the output of Scribe A. One of Scribe B's more sustained efforts in this smaller, finer script begins on fol. 26va line 4 last word *tat* and continues for the whole of the rest of fol. 26v. At the top of fol. 27ra, Scribe A takes over, very briefly, for five and a half lines of MS text, ending *wes bliðe*. Thereafter scribe B resumes but with his more usual thickness of nib and large letter size. On hands, see also Roberts (1994: 7-8). The contributions of the two hands are as follows: hand A – fols. 3ra-18vb line 6 (*mahte*); 27ra lines 1-6 (*wes bliðe*); 88ra-89rb line 3 (*þan kinge*); hand B – fols. 18vb line 6 (*of his*) -26vb (end); 27ra line 6 (*þat mæiden*) -87vb (end); 89rb line 3 (*to ani*) -194vb (end).

## 2. Line fillers

Most early Middle English scribes like to have text columns full with no empty parchment except where a new section begins. It is noticeable that scribe A, while writing much more neatly and regularly in general, makes no special attempt to justify the right margins of his columns. They are distinctly wavy. When hand B takes over with his much more irregular script he also does not justify very strictly. But from fol. 23r there seems to begin an effort to make the two blocks of text per page justify right as well as left. It is not completely successful, and later on he has phases where he seems not to worry about it so much, but for long stretches the general effect is much more of equal text blocks.

A number of different line-filling ploys seem to have been used other than simply filling the space with crosses or other meaningless patterns, which are found in later Middle English. Scribe B has an unusually large repertoire of different line fillers. Sometimes he repeats the last letter of a word at a line end – usually with a gap between the two appearances of the letter e.g. *his s* fol. 23ra, *shulden n* fol. 23rv. He also has a tendency to start a word with a single letter



at the line end and then to write the whole word on the next line, e.g. *e\cniht* fol. 29va. I have not come across this method of line-filling in any other hand. Scribe B also sometimes uses a more commonplace method; he capitalises or makes the final letter of a line exaggeratedly big to solve the problem of line-end gaps, e.g. greatly widened capital <n> on fols. 25vb, 31ra and 34va. He also capitalises final <s> <r> and <a>. He sometimes enlarges final letters of the line by pulling out cross bars to greater than normal length or simply by making the letter bigger. Occasionally, he detaches the last letter of a word without repeating it, e.g. *we l* fol. 29rb. Later in the manuscript he adopts a habit for a stretch of using three or more horizontal lines to fill a small space. Where he leaves a gap between the penultimate and ultimate letter, occasionally this midword gap is filled by two horizontal strokes. He sometimes punctuates using two punctus instead of one.